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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002700

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DEPT FOR SA/INS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: KING RETURNS, PROTESTS CONTINUE

REF: KATHMANDU 2692

Classified By: Charge Elisabeth Millard. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary

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11. (SBU) Following his return to Nepal after a three week absence, the King issued a statement on December 2 calling on the people of Nepal to unite with patriotism. Though he did not specifically address the Party-Maoist 12 point understanding announced in his absence, he termed efforts toward peace praiseworthy, but clearly focused on his plan of municipal and then general elections. Embassy interlocutors viewed the King's silence on the Maoist-Party understanding as positive. The incident on December 2, when UML-organized protesters pelted stones (reftel) at the Crown Prince's motorcade on the way to the airport to greet his parents had a variety of consequences: The Crown Prince instructed the government to launch an investigation into the security lapse; the police held five suspected rock throwers under the Public Offense Act and released thirteen others who subsequently charged the police with torture and other abuses while in custody; on December 3, police had to stop a pro-Palace group from attacking CPN-UML headquarters; and student groups around the country demonstrated against the pro-Palace group's actions, with police using teargas to break up protests in Kathmandu on December 4. The previously planned December 3 Nepali Congress rally in Biratnagar to urge the King to take advantage of the cease-fire was peaceful, though party cadre charged the government with stopping busloads of people who planned to participate. End Summary.

#### King's Statement: Welcoming Peace Initiatives

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12. (SBU) Returning from his three week trip abroad, the King issued a statement on December 2 discussing his travels, calling for peace and looking toward the upcoming municipal elections (see para 9 for full text.) The King said, "Restoration of a lasting peace and a meaningful exercise in multiparty democracy is what Nepal needs and what the Nepalese people yearn for. As peace and security in the country has improved, the country is gearing up for municipal and general elections." While he did not directly comment on the Party-Maoist 12 point understanding which was announced in his absence, he lauded efforts toward peace, "Such a state of affairs is a matter of joy to all those who believe in

democracy and any contribution towards strengthening this situation which will restore sustainable peace and enable elected representatives to govern is praiseworthy." The King suggested that free and fair elections could only be realized if violence was renounced and efforts were made to win "the hearts and minds" of the people by focusing on "patriotism." The King also thanked his son for "discharging duties on our behalf during our absence." Embassy interlocutors viewed the King's silence on the Maoist-Party understanding as positive.

#### Paras Questions Security Lapse

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¶3. (U) December 4 newspapers headlined Crown Prince Paras' visit to police headquarters on Saturday to investigate throwing of stones at his motorcade as he traveled to the airport to meet his parents on December 2 (reftel). Paras summoned all four security agency chiefs for a meeting on December 3. The security agencies formed a panel to investigate the incident, and subsequently the panel suspended three police officials, including the Chief of the Kathmandu District police, for lapsed security allowing the stone throwing incident to occur.

#### Youths Detained for Stone Throwing

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¶4. (U) Amid allegations of police abuse, police released thirteen of the eighteen individuals detained following the stone throwing at the royal motorcade and charged the remaining five under the Public Offense Act (POA) (reftel). Under the POA, the police can hold individuals for 25 days for further investigation before presenting them to the Chief District Officer. Students told media they had been walking home from classes and had sought refuge inside a bakery to wait for the stone throwing to end. Shanker Thing, a 12 year old waiter, said "the policemen dragged the students out and put them in a van. They took me as well, saying we were the ones who had pelted stones at the royal motorcade." One of four boys who identified themselves as students, Sachin Bhatta, 15, claimed that the police "hit us, seized our bags and asked us which party and union we belonged to." He said the police did not give detainees food for over 24 hours. Sainla Lama, father of one of the detained students, asserted that police denied parents and relatives access to detainees. Ram Hari Neupane, 17, claimed that the police beat him while in custody and after learning he worked for Himal Media, told him, "it makes no difference as all media houses in the country would soon close down." Tenth grader Surya Prakash Bhatt, one of five detained under POA, said security personnel threatened to beat detainees, telling them they were "insignificant" and "it wouldn't matter even if you died." Human rights representatives, including the United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Refugees and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), met with the prisoners on December 4. CPM-UML General Secretary M.K. Nepal spoke at the police station on December 4, saying the detainees were held without arrest warrants and tortured. He noted that the violence occurred "after a sponsored group provoked peaceful demonstrators."

#### Attack on UML Party Headquarters Averted...

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¶5. (U) Following the stone throwing incident at the motorcade and the confrontation of a pro-palace group with UML demonstrators departing the December 2 rally in Kathmandu (reftel), army, armed police and civil police provided security to UML Party Headquarters on December 3, after hearing about possible attacks by pro-Palace group. The group chanted slogans against political parties and announced an attack on the UML office at around 1700 local time on December 3. Police diverted the group, which dispersed peacefully at 2030 local time. On December 4, the UML Standing Committee demanded a probe and immediate action against "the hooligans." The Committee also expressed appreciation for the immediate steps taken by security personnel to prevent an attack.

### ...Student Protests Follow

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¶16. (U) To protest the December 3 attempted attack on the UML headquarters, students at Amrit Science College and Sarawati Campus in Kathmandu (near Thamel tourist area) staged a traffic strike in front of the colleges on December 4. Media reported that police used about 10 rounds of teargas to break up the protest after the All Nepal National Free Student's Union, the student wing of the UML, blocked traffic in front of the college for three hours. Students and civil society members in Pokhara staged a peaceful rally on December 4 to protest the attempted attack on the UML headquarters. The Nepal Students Union, the student wing of the Nepali Congress Party (NC), issued a statement in support of the UML on December 4 saying in part "the regime is digging its grave by pushing forward hired gangsters in the name of blind nationalists."

### Peaceful NC Rally in Biratnagar Calls for Peace

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¶17. (U) Media reported that the previously scheduled NC mass meeting in Biratnagar, Nepal's second largest city, on December 3 was peaceful. However, NC party members claimed that security personnel blocked more than 60 buses carrying NC supporters from Jhapa and Saptari Districts from participating in the rallies. Commenting on the cease-fire at the rally, G.P. Koirala said that "the Maoists have extended their unilateral cease-fire for a month keeping in view the request of the seven-party alliance." He said it was "very strange that the King is hesitating to take concrete steps to restore peace at a time when every sector, every individual, wants it."

### Comment

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¶18. (C) While the King's December 2 statement was positive largely for what it did not contain -- a condemnation of the Party-Maoist alliance -- the King still must do more to seize the initiative. Until he does so, the rhetoric by political party leaders will becoming more and more strident. Parties are able to mobilize people across the country, but it is noticeable that they are not publicizing the number of participants, likely because the numbers are well below expectations. Fifteen thousand people in Kathmandu out of 2.5 million people show that the general public is still wary of supporting the Parties.

### Full Text of King's December 2 Statement

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¶19. (U) The full text of His Majesty's message to the nation upon his return after three weeks absence on December 2, 2005 follows:

Begin text.

Beloved countrymen,  
We are happy to return home today after participating in the Thirteenth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held in Dhaka, capital of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, capital of the Republic of Tunisia. During our sojourn abroad, we also paid friendly visits to some countries of the African continent.

The SAARC Summit provided us an opportunity to reiterate Nepal's commitment to the SAARC process and voice our views on matters of common interest for our region. At a time when the region is faced with common challenges like non-interference in others internal affairs, a double standard on terrorism, jeopardizing regional peace and stability, taking steps to defeat this scourge along with eradicating poverty and addressing the root causes of underdevelopment, we are confident that the Dhaka Declaration, which reflects the common aspirations of all the

peoples in the region, will form a firm basis for enhanced cooperation amongst the nations of our region to ensure qualitative improvement in the living standards of our citizens in a secure environment.

The Summit also afforded us an occasion to interact with other leaders of the countries of the region on matters of regional and mutual interests, which, we are confident, will contribute to the further consolidation of the cordial ties existing between Nepal and these countries in the coming days.

Our participation in the World Summit on the Information Society has, we believe, contributed to bridging the digital divide between developing countries and the developed world, focusing on the opportunity and challenges faced by the global community in translating into reality an inclusive information society, ensuring information and communication technology for the progress of all.

In Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, we had the opportunity to meet all ranks of the contingent of the Royal Nepalese Army serving in the peace-keeping mission at the call of the United Nations, Organization. We were happy to learn that the Royal Nepalese Army, which has been involved in peace-keeping along with reconstruction and rehabilitation in Burundi as well as other parts of the world, is praised for its contributions. At the same time, we were also impressed with the sincerity and commitment of our dutiful patriotic soldiers.

In the course of our visit, we also paid friendly visits to the Republic of South Africa, Tanzania and the Arab Republic of Egypt, where we had the opportunity to meet and exchange views with the leaders. We believe our visits there will open new avenues in enhancing relations between Nepal and these countries.

Restoration of a lasting peace and a meaningful exercise in multiparty democracy is what Nepal needs and what the Nepalese people yearn for. As peace and security in the country has improved, the country is gearing up for municipal and general elections. Such a state of affairs is a matter of joy to all those who believe in democracy and any contribution towards strengthening this situation which will restore sustainable peace and enable the elected representatives to govern is praiseworthy. The nation's determination in conducting free and fair elections, which is the very soul of democracy, can be realized only if violence is renounced and efforts are made to win the hearts and minds of the people rather than running from pillar to post. It is obvious that a consensus can be achieved only if the national psyche of the Nepalese people, who have always remained independent throughout history, and patriotism is made the focal point.

We thank Chairman of the Council of Royal Representatives our son His Royal Highness Crown Prince Paras Bir Bikram Shah Dev and other members for discharging duties on our behalf during our absence. Finally, we would also like to thank our beloved countrymen for their sense of responsibility and discipline in the overall interest of the motherland.

May Lord Pashupatinath bless us all!  
Jaya Nepal!

End text.  
MILLARD